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SUBJECT Attempts to Increase Protestant Influence
in the Bundestag

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INFO. Early December 1950SUPPLEMENT TO
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SOURCE Reliable official.

- On 7 December 1950 the DPA (German Press Agency) reported from Bonn that Protestant leaders from all Bundestag factions had met that day under the chairmanship of Bundestag president, Dr. Hermann Ehlers. The dispatch added that the meeting had no political significance and that only topics of church interest were discussed.
- In conversation with a friend a few days later, Ehlers gave the following version of the meeting: The fact that Protestant deputies from most of the parties have met together was, in his opinion, of considerable political significance. The meeting was suggested and called by the president of the Evangelical Church Conference, von Thadden - Trieglaff and he, Ehlers, was glad to put his office at his disposal. Among those present were the following: Dr. Robert Tillmanns (CDU), Johannes Kunze (CDU), Arno Hennig (SPD), Fritz Bengel (SPD), Dr. Hans Wellhausen (FDP), and Adolf von Thadden (DPR), who is a step-brother of the Church Conference president. Former Interior Minister Dr. Gustav Heinemann was invited but did not come.
- It was decided to hold similar meetings in the future with church leaders and politicians of all parties attending, at four to six weeks intervals, to discuss both political and church topics.

The following were described by Ehlers as concrete results of the 7 December meeting:

- It was agreed to make most thorough preparations for the meeting of the Evangelical Church, scheduled for August 1951 in Berlin. It is intended to make this meeting an event of great political significance, similar to the Catholic Day.
- The deputies attending the 7 December meeting have agreed to devote great attention to the problems of co-determination, equalization of war losses (Lastenausgleich), and rearmament. They are going to present the opinions of their respective parties to this council, and they will attempt to find a protestant answer to these problems which will, in turn, be presented to their respective factions. The intention seems to be the creation of a counterweight to allegedly one-sided Catholic influence on the policies of the Federal Government.

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5. Dr. Ehlers said that there was no truth in the reports that Dr. Heinemann intended to establish a Protestant party; he suggested that Heinemann might have been misunderstood. It was true that Heinemann intended to increase greatly his political activities, but he will definitely remain in the CDU as long as the party continues as an all-Christian rather than a Catholic party. If the CDU were to take an exclusively Catholic line he, too, would resign from the party, the president of the "unrest" stated.

6. With reference to Heinemann, Dr. Ehlers made the following comments: Heinemann was disappointed that his resignation had no great political effect in the CDU. The fact is that within the CDU Heinemann never had much influence. On the other hand, among the active Protestants, especially in the CVJ (Christlicher Verein junger Männer - Young Men's Christian Association), Heinemann is one of the most influential, perhaps the most influential person. Heinemann would have little success with a new political party. He can, however, create trends among the Protestants which would undoubtedly effect, not always directly, the policies of the CDU. Dr. Ehlers pointed to the recent Convention of Protestant Men (Evangelischer Männertag) where Heinemann had made a great impression, especially among the young people.

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